From: Dan Burgin
To: 'Microsoft.atr(a)usdoj.gov'
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Subject: Microsoft Settlement

While no lover of Microsoft and their tactics - I feel that any marketshare gained by competitive browsers causes more harm to companies than most people realize. Being an entrepreneur of a venture-backed startup - I, like most of my colleagues, work hard to develop business plans that won't be too attractive for Microsoft to emulate and then destroy any competitors in the space by giving the technology away for free. While this sometimes make finding good Internet technology businesses more difficult - it is capitalism at it's best.

However, many people fail to recognize the incredible waste in development dollars spent by companies who develop Internet products with the browser as the primary client-side interface. I don't really care who wins the browser war, just as long as their is a default standard - right now that standard exists because of the dominance of Internet Explorer. Companies like Microsoft (and AOL/Netscape included) will never be required to build browsers that adhere to standards...quite the contrary, they ignore the standard as a way to compete. This means that if there is no clear winner in the browser war, there are now competing standards with signficant marketshare. This means that products built to work on both the browsers, as they now must, are required to a) either spend vast amounts of capital developing work-arounds for the competing standards, or b) lower the bar with the functionality of their solutions to meet the lowest common denominator of what works in both browsers. Each vendor who gains market share increases this complexity exponentially.

While I was just fine developing for Netscape when it was the dominant browser, I was actually happy when Microsoft came along with a browser that, because it was bundled into the OS, was easier for people to adopt. This gave it massive marketshare (well over 80% today). With minimal effort we now support all versions of Internet Explorer and only the most popular versions of Netscape and achieve 96% market coverage.

Just to make matters worse, the open source efforts at Netscape mean that the 6.0 version of the browser works completely different from it's predecessors and the vicious support cycle continues. Most people couldn't care less which browser they use, but to small companies trying to build the next generation of browser-based applications - life is hell when more than one browser has significant marketshare. Browsers are simple interface devices that should be bundled, should be free, and should either follow the standard, or set it.

I am asking you to please consider trying to support a position that does not make market conditions worse, dramatically worse, for small technology business - and to let Netscape die the death it deserves - and that the

market has dictated.

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